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ABSTRACT

This paper provides an overview of the Carbo Reading Styles Program (RSP), a comprehensive reading program that applies learning styles concepts to reading. The program uses themes, activities, and literature to help improve student performance across all subject areas. Main components of RSP include: a variety of instructional strategies to accommodate students' strengths; strategies for staffing and scheduling; heterogeneous grouping; parental involvement; the use of a reading style inventory to determine the most effective instruction for each student; and the Carbo Recorded-Book Method (with brief segments of high interest materials recorded on tape for repeated listening and reading). The program has been implemented in approximately 250 sites across the United States. Sections of the paper discuss background, philosophy and goals, program components, evidence of effectiveness, professional development and support, implementation, costs, considerations, contact information, and policy issues and questions. (SR)

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Carbo Reading Styles

**Background - Philosophy and Goals - Program Components - Evidence of Effectiveness
Professional Development and Support - Implementation - Costs - Considerations
Policy Issues and Questions - Resources**

Topic or Category: Reading
Grade Level: K-8
Target Population: All

OVERVIEW

Background and Scope:

Carbo Reading Styles Program (RSP) is a comprehensive reading program that applies learning styles concepts to reading. Research conducted by Marie Carbo and a team of teachers indicates that students have different "reading styles" that predispose them to learn more readily using specific reading techniques. The program uses themes, activities and literature to help improve student performance across all subject areas. Teachers learn to identify and accommodate their students' strengths and weaknesses with a variety of effective strategies for reading instruction.

Reading Styles was developed in 1975 by Marie Carbo, founder of the National Reading Styles Institute (NRSI), and is grounded in research in child development, learning styles, accelerated learning and brain behavior. The program has been implemented in approximately 250 schools nationwide.

Philosophy and Goals:

The philosophy behind the RSP is to increase student literacy by making learning to read so easy and enjoyable that students become motivated, confident and fluent readers in short periods of time. The program's primary goal is to ensure high, rapid reading gains, especially with the bottom one-third of students in grades K-6. The program is based upon the belief that no single reading method is best for every child.

Program Components:

The main components of the Reading Styles Program include the following:
Strategies of Instruction: These include recorded readings, manipulatives, thematic instruction and a variety of methods to accommodate students' strengths.
Strategies for Staffing and Scheduling: These include formation of building teams, use of coaching models, heterogeneous groups and block scheduling for grade-level planning.
Heterogeneous Grouping: Students are grouped heterogeneously and read for one to two hours per day, individually or in small groups.
Parental involvement: Parents learn about their children's strengths and how best to work with them at home in a variety of ways, including reading to their child and listening to him or her reading.
Reading Style Inventory: This assessment identifies students' key strengths and weaknesses to determine the most effective reading methods, materials and strategies for each student.
Carbo Recorded-Book Method: Brief segments of high-interest materials are recorded on tape at below-normal speeds. Students listen to the material repeatedly and later read the passages aloud to the teacher.

Evidence of Effectiveness:

1. *Study of Three Districts*
Reserachers Barber, Carbo and Thomasson (1998) conducted an experimental study across three school districts which involved eight teacher pairs representing grades 1-6 and a total of 269 students. The research studied the effect on student achievement by teachers who used the reading styles methodology (experimental condition) against those teachers who did not. The student population varied somewhat among the three participating school districts:
Lindberg School District's student population came from a wide range of socioeconomic populations, with two-thirds from upper-middle-class families and one-third from a poor inner-city area.
Three-fourths of the students selected to participate at the two other sites, Dillon School District and Bledsoe School District, were from low-socioeconomic homes as defined by the Federal Lunch Program.
Each site administered a pretest in fall 1992 and a post-test (grade-level appropriate at the time) in spring 1993. The pretests and post-tests were the same form of the school district's standardized achievement test.

In the results presented below, the effect size is determined by the difference between the mean of the experimental group's post-test score and the mean of the control group's post-test score divided by the standard deviation of the control group's post-test score.

Comparison of Reading Style Program Students and Control Group Post-test Total Score and Effect-Size Analysis

School District/Grade Level	Number of Students	RSP Students	Control Group	Effect Size
Lindberg/1st Grade	27	69.7	52.4	0.78
Lindberg/1st Grade	35	66.8	51.5	0.89
Dillon/1st Grade	33	51.5	29.0	2.37
Lindberg/2nd Grade	37	74.3	63.4	0.47
Bledoe/ 3rd and 4th Grade	19	35.1	36.6	-0.07*
Bledoe/ 3rd and 4th Grade	20	33.4	36.6	-0.15*
Bledoe/4th Grade	38	55.5	29.0	0.0
Bledoe/6th Grade	60	60.9	52.0	0.33

*In these settings, teachers did not fully implement RSI.

2. *Uvalde, Texas*
Robb Elementary School field-tested the Carbo Reading Styles Program (Skipper, 1997) during a six-week summer school session for 1st- grade students. The Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test was administered as a pretest and post-test, with following results:
Among the 42 1st graders tested, the average reading gain was 3.5 months.
Sixty-three percent of the students scored gains of three to six months in reading achievement during the six-week session.
No student regressed in achievement.
The range of grade-equivalent scores for the group rose from K-2.0 in early June to 1.0-2.3 in mid-July.
Only two of the 42 children were held back, dropping the 1st-grade retention rate from 8.9% to 1.7%.

3. *State of Washington*
LaShell (1996) conducted a matched study of two groups of 90 students in grades 2-6 who were classified as learning disabled. The students were from one school in each of two rural K-12 districts in Washington State. The following tests were administered to all students as pretests and post-tests during the seven-month study: Reading Styles Inventory (RSI) to identify recommended reading methods, Gray Oral Reading Test to assess reading achievement and the Intellectual Achievement Responsibility Questionnaire to measure locus of control.

During the treatment period, control-group teachers continued to teach with conventional, individualized special education materials and methods. The experimental group was classified according to specific reading methodologies as recommended by the RSI. The following results were found:
Students in the experimental group using reading styles achieved a 17-month gain in reading, compared to the control group which achieved only a four-month gain.

Professional Development and Support:

The National Reading Styles Institute (NRSI) offers three distinct staff development plans for implementing the Carbo Reading Styles Program for comprehensive reading reform. Professional development is required, and schools and districts may select the level of training appropriate for their needs.

The Comprehensive Training Plan includes:
Four days of training with seven days of technical assistance
$950 in training materials per teacher
Building team training sessions (including planning and management, national conference attendance and model school visit).

The Basic Plus Training Plan includes:
Four days of training plus three days of technical assistance
$300 in training materials per teacher.

The Basic Training Plan includes:
Four days of training plus one day of technical assistance
$150 training/classroom materials per teacher.

NRSI employs a core group of trainers from many states conduct professional development and to train one or more in-district reading styles facilitators to provide continuing support to Reading Styles schools. In addition, NRSI offers regional seminars, an annual national conference and a Web site (www.nrsi.com) for dissemination of training and instructional ideas.

Implementation:

Successful adoption requires strong support from the principal and at least 75% of the faculty. Training in Year One consists of four days of onsite training and additional days of technical assistance, coaching and evaluation. Subsequent support in Years Two and Three includes onsite training visits, training materials, classroom materials, technical assistance and evaluation by NRSI.

The Degrees of Reading Styles Implementation Checklist allows faculties to measure their implementation against characteristics known to result in effective programs. The checklist may be used internally or as part of an outside program evaluation.

Implementation of the Carbo Reading Styles Program requires schools to use several key materials and strategies, including the Reading Style Inventory and the Carbo Recorded-Book Method.

All Reading Styles schools need to provide the following equipment in order to achieve full program implementation: one listening center and five tape players per classroom, and one tape duplicator and one laminating machine per building.

Costs:

Fees and costs depend on the number of teachers and students participating, as well as the materials already available within a school or district. The following prices are in effect through Decemeber 31, 1999.
Comprehensive Training Plan costs are $50,000-$55,000 per year for 30 teachers, plus $950 for each

additional teacher. Years Two and Three are approximately $35,000 each.
The Basic Plus Training Plan costs $15,000 per 30 teachers, plus $295 for each additional teacher. Consultants' travel expenses are an additional cost to be paid by the school or district.
The Basic Training Plan is $9,500 per 30 teachers, plus $150 for each additional teacher. Consultants' travel expenses are additional.

Schools must provide a listening center and five tape players and headsets per classroom, and one tape duplicator and one laminating machine per building at an estimated cost of $4,000.

The development of a Carbo Reading Styles Model School costs approximately $12,000 to $20,000 beyond the training fees for a standard four-day training.

Considerations:

Teachers and administrators must possess a strong desire to improve their school's reading program. While it is possible for a single teacher to implement RSP at a high level, whole-building commitment brings higher levels of student success.

The cost for professional development, materials and supplies is a consideration for implementation of the Carbo Reading Styles Program. In addition, teachers are encouraged to create comfortable reading environments in their classrooms by using couches, pillows and soft lighting.

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Policy Issues and Questions:
How can states help districts and schools choose the most appropriate reading programs to improve students' skills and performance? What information would be useful?
Should states promote particular reading programs for districts and schools to use?
How can a reading program's track record be checked and validated?
What criteria should states and districts use to invest in various reading programs initially and for the long term?
How should policymakers weigh the benefits of a reading program versus its cost and required resources? Can a balance be struck between effectiveness and efficiency?
What state policies can help improve teacher training and professional development so teachers are better equipped to help all students read successfully?

Resources:
Barber, Larry; Carbo, Marie; and Thomasson, Rebecca (1998). *A Comparative Study of the Reading Styles Program to Extant Programs of Teaching Reading.* Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa International.

LaShell, Lois. (1986). *An Experimental Investigation: The Effects upon Reading Achievement and Locus of Control When Matching Instruction to the Reading Styles of Learning-Disabled Students.* Doctoral study.

National Reading Styles Institute. [On-line] Available: http://www.nrsi.com

Skipper, Barbara L. (1997). "Reading with Style." *The American School Board Journal,* vol. 184, no. 2, pp. 36-37.

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